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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 002096

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [PHUM](#) [CG](#) [UN](#)

SUBJECT: THE CENTER CANNOT HOLD: GOMA AND NORTH KIVU
INSECURITY MOUNTING

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (C) Summary: A wave of what appear to be executions in Goma, as well as clashes throughout North Kivu between military nominally responsive to regional military commander Obed and militia loyal to Governor Eugene Serufuli, suggest that Serufuli's grip on his province might be slipping. Monuc believes the current instability results in part from political manipulation by elements in Kinshasa, and Serufuli agrees. Whatever the cause, North Kivu -- and Goma in particular -- seems potentially to be the next "crisis site" in eastern Congo. End Summary.

Stepping Up The Heat on RCD Bastion Of North Kivu

12. (C) North Kivu Governor Eugene Serufuli, long the master political juggler of the DRC, artfully balancing Kigali and Kinshasa's interests against his own, may finally be embroiled in a situation from which he will not easily wriggle free. For the last six months his stronghold, Goma, has effectively been surrounded by about 20,000 forces loyal to Kinshasa, dispatched to eastern Congo to confront the threat posed by rebellious general Laurent Nkunda, the despoiler of Bukavu. Although Nkunda's forces seem to have dissipated, and Nkunda himself disappeared, the loyalist forces have not been recalled, but instead have remained in a loose ring around Goma, with some even stationed in the northern part of North Kivu itself. Over the last two months in particular there have been sporadic clashes between elements of the 8th and 10th military regions (North and South Kivu, respectively), whose regional commanders (Obed and Mabe) are at odds. Kinshasa regards Serufuli with mistrust, but views Obed even more negatively. Indeed, Kabila has stated to diplomats that he considers Obed to have facilitated Nkunda's insurrection, and Obed has several times refused to fully implement orders from the FARDC chain of command. Secure in Goma, however, and with backing from Serufuli, Obed has been a difficult issue with which to come to grips.

13. (C) Over the last several weeks, however, a wedge seems to have been increasingly driven between Serufuli and Obed. Ex-RCD military responsible, at least nominally, to Obed have been robbing citizens and even stores in Goma, and in outlying areas, raping women and burning homes in villages. Serufuli several times told PolCouns that the problem is that these soldiers are not being paid -- unlike compatriots in neighboring military regions, he said. (Note: Kinshasa has been marginally better than usual in its record of paying the troops in the field and the result, by-and-large, has been a slightly better record in regards to respecting civilians' rights in most places. We know, for instance, that troops in South Kivu, Maniema and Kisangani have been being paid at least something, sometimes. We don't know that the same is true of 8th district North Kivu troops. End Note.)

Kinshasa Taking A More Direct Hand?

14. (C) In the last week, the situation has taken an even more foreboding turn. A man whom Serufuli identified to PolCouns as a "lawyer and investigator from Kinshasa" was killed execution-style four days ago, and one night later a police captain, another lawyer and an "innocent bystander" were murdered the same way. Other victims of what appears to be a targeted campaign (as distinct from the more random robberies) include a student and a human rights NGO worker (Congolese). When PolCouns asked Serufuli for more detail regarding Kinshasa's investigation, Serufuli said he was not fully informed but believed it to be aimed at military misconduct. He insisted, however, that he retained full confidence in General Obed. Monuc Head-of-Office M'hand Njuzi said that Monuc's investigations indicate that all the crimes, including the recent executions, have been conducted by RCD soldiers. Monuc has proposed increased joint (Monuc-FARDC-police) patrols of the city to address the immediate security situation. Meanwhile, particularly in outlying villages such as Kanyabayonga (near Butembu in the northern part of the province) Serufuli's militia, assisted often by students, increasingly are facing-off against soldiers trying to pillage neighborhoods or entire villages.

Comment

15. (C) Current events could very possibly represent the fruit of a Kinshasa-orchestrated (read Presidency) campaign.

The political class has speculated for months about a possible deal with Serufuli, maybe involving a Ministerial portfolio, but Serufuli has preferred to build his base and authority in his fiefdom in North Kivu. If Kinshasa's hand indeed is in the Goma events, then it seems likely to us that this could be as a way to ratchet up pressure on Serufuli to "make a deal," and become de facto part of a larger Kabila camp. This scenario would greatly advance PPRD interests in North Kivu (where otherwise they will not be strong), and potentially allow Serufuli to remain in place, even as the elected governor. Given that such a deal by Serufuli (with either the PPRD or MLC, for instance) would threaten RCD interests, it is also possible that the current wave of violence is being orchestrated by RCD hardliners such as Bizima Karaha, to threaten and weaken Serufuli. What the case, if the security situation truly spirals out of control, Kinshasa could be in a position to dispatch FADRC troops into the province to restore order and protect the citizens - where they doubtless would come into conflict with Serufuli's militia, sparking a wider confrontation. Serufuli has not yet lost his grip, by any means, but probably within the next few weeks it will be clear whether he can regain full control, or begin instead to drop some of the political balls he has so artfully juggled.

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